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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 003533

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/PPA, NEA/AGS, INR/IZ, INR/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: Special Media Reaction Report - Opinions on the Iraqi Draft Constitution

SUMMARY: Discussion on the draft constitution was the major editorial theme of the daily newspapers on August 29, 2005.  
END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A. "Achievement and Victory"](#)  
Al-Bayyan (affiliated with the Islamic A-Da'wa Party led by Al-Ja'afari) published a front-page editorial about the constitution:

"Yesterday, the Iraqi people felt pleased about the endorsement of the draft constitution. This ratification came after three days of discussions and meetings to solve all pending issues. After that, we are now waiting for referendum day. All the political parties and blocs in the National Assembly have made concerted efforts to ensure that all Iraqi sects participated in the constitutional process. They gave those who boycotted elections a chance to participate in this process for the sake of drafting a united constitution.

However, some groups tried to impose their conditions at the expenses of others and this has led to a delay in settling pending issues. It was possible to solve these issues through voting in the National Assembly yet the parliamentary blocs ignored that option and preferred negotiating in a way that satisfied all groups. We think that the endorsement of the draft constitution is a significant achievement and victory for the Iraqi people because this constitution was drafted by Iraqis and ratified by the peoples' representatives. This represents a victory because it is a big strike against the terrorists. This victory has reinforced the political process and moved Iraq forward on a new historic stage."

[1B. "The Draft Constitution at the National Assembly"](#)  
Ad-Dustoor (independent) published a front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh about the constitution:

"The national assembly approved the completed draft of the permanent constitution yesterday with reservations of the fifteen Sunni members. After the approval of the draft, they started to debate and negotiate and will continue until the upcoming referendum on October 15, 2005, when Iraqis will take responsibility and make a final decision. Voting "Yes" or "No," all Iraqi sects will engage in the decisive moment to move their country to a bright new future.

All those who criticize the viewpoints and reservations between political leaders and constitution drafting members are wrong, this is how Iraqis should discuss and decide their future-through democracy and freedom. Now we can express our opinions and thoughts and we can reject and discuss things freely.

All political leaders should work on behalf of the Iraqi national compact, not to gain private benefits. We are working hard to make this political process succeed and to defeat those who tried their best to terminate Iraqi dreams. The final outcome will be decided by good Iraqis who sacrifice themselves for the freedom of their country. Now that the draft constitution is complete (from the legislative angle) we will move to the public referendum

stage to get real and final and approval for Iraq's new permanent constitution."

**1C. "The Announcement of a Distinguished Day in Iraq"**  
Al-Taakhi (affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party led Masood Barazani) published a front-page editorial by Sa'ad Badr Khan about the constitution:

"Yesterday, the Iraqi draft constitution was finally announced. Thus, Iraq approaches another step forward in the constitutional process--after this the draft is to be approved by the Iraqi people. The constitution is the most dangerous document in a society. It's a document that organizes relationships between rulers and the people and it outline the main authorities within the community. Unfortunately, Iraq has gone decades without having a constitution because the dictator Saddam considered it merely a piece of paper that could be ripped at anytime. That is how Saddam governed the country without a constitution. The Kurdish people have struggled for the sake of establishing democracy in Iraq and to guarantee their legitimate rights. Therefore, the Kurds want an Iraqi constitution that can guarantee and safeguard Kurdish rights as a legitimate segment of people in Iraq. Without a doubt, the drafting of the constitution was a very difficult task and it would not have been accomplished without the bone fide efforts of patriotic politicians. The Kurdish leadership has played a big role in making this draft successful through opening the door to dialogue among different Iraqi groups. We are excited about the accomplishment of the draft constitution but at the same time, we must remember that the Kurds have approved this constitution despite the fact that it does not completely satisfy Kurdish ambitions. The Kurds have the right to self-determination. Although there are some issues (such as the status of Kirkuk) that remain to be solved we will never give up our demands. We hope that all Iraqis will approve the draft constitution so that they can live new lives based on democracy and justice. The 28th of August will always be a historic day in Iraq's history."

**1D. "Iraq Before and After the Constitution"**  
Az-Zaman (independent, anti coalition) published a page-five editorial by Jassem Murad:

"Will the constitution stabilize the security, political, economic and humanitarian situation in Iraq? In fact, all political parties bet on the elections and said that these elections would bring peace and stability back to this country. Those elections were successfully held in spite of terrorists' plans that attempted to thwart them. However, those elections could not stabilize the situation in Iraq. The situation has actually worsened and the post election period led to a plurality of political parties scattered on the Iraqi map. If this is the post election period, then how can we imagine what will happen after the constitution's ratification? Can this constitution solve our crises? We could say yes if there were a national Iraqi leadership that could move Iraq forward and away from sectarianism but the reality shows that the constitution cannot solve our crises because we have to understand these crises open-mindedly and transparently. We have to reinforce the notion of national dialogue to isolate terrorists from those who want to participate in the political process. In addition, we must work hard to improve public services and start reconstruction projects to end unemployment in Iraq. And we have to make citizens feel they are protected by the government. By accomplishing these conditions, the post constitutional period may witness a historic move in our lives. Otherwise, crises will not be solved and they will continue until they make people explode against the government."

**1E. "About the Endorsement of the Draft Constitution"**  
As-Sabah al-Jadeed (independent) published a front-page editorial by Ismael Zayer:

"Iraqis deserve to celebrate the completion of their permanent draft constitution, a good initiative for Iraqis to open closed doors. Iraqis reached a final accord after hard and peaceful efforts and dialogue among all political groups to reach a final agreement freely and with no air of injustice."

We may have different points of view and opinions but we are all a unified nation, a land and country with one significant Iraqi soul throughout.

We agree with all those who have their own ideas and views concerning the constitution, they have a right to express their choices the way they want through the media. Today we celebrate our success, but we should be aware that this is the first step in the democratic process, and we must work hard and prepare for the next step--the upcoming referendum on the draft constitution.

If Iraqis accept or reject the draft constitution freely in

the upcoming referendum process we must respect that. What is more important is that we have a truly free and fair referendum with polling boxes far removed from Iraq's presidential guards, private guards, and the security and intelligence apparatus because we now have national dialogue and freedom."

**F. "Iraqi Islamic Party's Al-Hashimi Outlines Position on Draft Constitution"**  
Al-Jazeera TV carries live a news conference, in Baghdad, by Tariq al-Hashimi, secretary general of The Iraqi Islamic Party, on the party's position on the draft constitution.

"All I can say is that the draft constitution was submitted in the absence of the principle of agreement which constituted the basis for the Iraqi Islamic Party's participation in becoming a partner in drafting the constitution. Regretfully, this draft constitution does not reflect our aspirations, concerns of Iraqis, nor fulfills our legitimate and national principles, as much as we had hoped it would. It is an incomplete draft and the party continues to have reservations over many of the issues enshrined in it which continued up until yesterday to be a subject of conflict and disagreement among negotiating parties. This is the opinion of the Iraqi Islamic Party. The party, through all possible political efforts, will not hesitate to amend these paragraphs until they become compatible with the country's higher interests and the concerns of Iraqis in the present and the future. Not the entire draft is bad. It includes good and bad elements. We shall confront the elements which we continue to believe that it would be in the interest of the country and Iraqis to change now or in the future. The Islamic Party contests this draft constitution, but does not reject it in part and parcel"

**G. "Sunni Leaders Reject Draft Constitution"**  
Al-Sharqiyah TV in Arabic 28 Aug 05, News conference by Abd-al-Nasir al-Janabi and Salih al-Mutlaq, members of the Iraqi National Dialogue Council.  
"..we do not believe that what was achieved rises to the level of the requirements which fulfill the Iraqi people's aspirations. We ended up with disagreement on key points which cannot be ignored in any way whatsoever. We believe that ignoring them will lead to partitioning Iraq -- land, people, and identity. Therefore, we announce that we do not accept and even reject the draft constitution paragraphs on which no agreement was reached. This renders the draft illegal. We also call on the Arab League, the United Nations, and all international community institutions to intervene and prevent the passage of this draft and to rectify the clear flaws in it. We, however, will continue to be a vital part of the political process and will work very hard and sincerely along the path aspired for our beloved Iraq, beginning with our active participation in the next elections, regardless of how the draft constitution will end up. The constitution must either be accepted or rejected as a whole. If a single point in the constitution is unacceptable, voters will reject the constitution altogether. We believe that the Iraqi citizen will reject this draft because of the presence of these controversial points. I think that if this constitution passes as it is, it will worsen everything in the country and it will increase the violence in the country. But at the same time we are asking through these channels all the Iraqis to express their views in a very peaceful way and be away from the violence."